

Message Text

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ACTION AF-10

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6744
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AMEMBASSY DAR ES SALAAM
AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY MOGADISCIO
CINCEUR

C O N F I D E N T I A L NAIROBI 5891

CINCEUR FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT, KE
SUBJ: MAJOR LUO DELEGATION TO CALL ON PRESIDENT KENYATTA

1. SUMMARY: A MAMMOTH LUO DELEGATION IS NOW SCHEDULED TO CALL ON AND PAY HOMAGE TO PRESIDENT KENYATTA AT STATE HOUSE NAKURU ON SATURDAY, APRIL 15. WHILE TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR THE CALL ARE NOT CLEAR, AND MAY NOT YET HAVE BEEN FINALLY RESOLVED, IT IS QUITE POSSIBLE EX-KENYAN VP JARAMOGI OGINGA ODINGA WILL BE INCLUDED IN GROUP. IF OGINGA ODINGA IS PHOTOGRAPHED SHAKING HANDS WITH KENYATTA IT WOULD SIGNAL HIS POLITICAL REHABILITATION AND ADD NEW DIMENSION TO INTERNAL POLITICAL JOCKEYING PRIOR TO KENYATTA'S DEMISE. END SUMMARY.

2. EFFORTS BY DISAFFECTED LUOS TO REGAIN POLITICAL RESPECTIBILITY AND RIGHT TO PARTICIPATE IN NATIONAL
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POLITICAL PROCESS HAS BEEN AFOOT FOR PAST YEAR AND A HALF. BUT UNTIL NOW THIS GROUP, WHICH IS LED BY OGINGA ODINGA, HAS BEEN THWARTED AT EVERY TURN BY POLITICAL ESTABLISHMENT. VICE PRESIDENT MOI, ATTORNEY GENERAL NJONJO AND THEIR GROUP HAVE (CORRECTLY) PERCEIVED THAT OGINGA'S ROLE IN INDEPENDENCE STRUGGLE, HIS STATUS AS ELDER, AND HIS POPULIST IDEOLOGY GIVE HIM POTENTIAL POLITICAL APPEAL

GREATER THAN THEIR OWN. FOR THEIR PART, ODINGA AND HIS FOLLOWERS MAKE NO SECRET OF THEIR DISTASTE FOR MOI AND HIS GROUP, WHO HAVE SYSTEMATICALLY PREVENTED THEM FROM ASSUMING WHAT THEY BELIEVE TO BE THEIR RIGHTFUL PLACE AS LUO AND NATIONAL LEADERS. KIKUYU INSIDERS, WHO ALSO DISLIKE AND FEAR MOI, SEE ODINGA LUOS AS AT LEAST SHORT-TERM ALLIES IN MANEUVERING SEEKING TO DISPLACE MOI. IT WAS PRESIDENT'S NEPHEW, NGENGI MUIGAI, WHO APPARENTLY PLAYED KEY ROLE IN CONVINCING PRESIDENT TO RECEIVE LUO DELEGATION THIS WEEKEND.

3. FIXING THIS APPOINTMENT HAS INVOLVED BEHIND SCENES POLITICAL STRUGGLE WORTHY OF STAKES INVOLVED. ON MARCH 3, SEVEN-MAN DELEGATION FROM LUO TRIBAL WELFARE ASSOCIATION, LUO UNION, WHICH IS CONTROLLED BY ODINGA ALLIES, CALLED ON PRESIDENT. IT WAS DURING COURSE OF THAT MEETING, ALSO ORCHESTRATED AND ATTENDED BY NGENGI MUIGAI, THAT KENYATTA AGREED TO RECEIVE LARGE LUO DELEGATION INCLUDING ODINGA ODINGA ON MARCH 31. MOI, NJONJO ET AL WERE OUT OF COUNTRY AT TIME. HOWEVER, THEIR POLITICAL ALLIES SUCH AS GEOFFREY KARIITHI, PERM SEC ON OFFICE OF PRESIDENT, REPORTEDLY WORKED TO HAVE MEETING CANCELLED. ARGUMENT USED AS THAT SUCH CALL BY LUOS WOULD BE DIVISIVE AND DAMAGING TO SENIOR LUOS IN GOVERNMENT WHO COULD NOT BE PLACED PUBLICLY IN SUBORDINATE ROLES TO LUO UNION LEADER AND/OR ODINGA ODINGA. A FEW DAYS LATER, MARCH 31 MEETING WAS POSTPONED. MOST OBSERVERS, JUDGING BY TRACK RECORD OF SUCCESS MOI-NJONJO GROUP HAS ENJOYED IN CONTAINING ODINGA

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ODINGA LUOS, BELIEVED CALL TO HAVE BEEN DEFINITELY CANCELLED. MUIGAI, HOWEVER, WAS REPORTEDLY ABLE TO PREVAIL ON PRESIDENT TO RECONSIDER ON GROUNDS THAT ON MARCH 3 COMMITMENT HAD BEEN MADE TO RECEIVE GROUP, AND THAT COMMITMENT SHOULD BE HONORED.

4. NOW THAT APRIL 15 MEETING IS APPARENTLY SET, BATTLE HAS SHIFTED TO SUCH MATTERS AS COMPOSITION OF GROUP OF LUO LEADERS WHICH WILL ACTUALLY MEET PRESIDENT. ODINGA OPPONENTS ARE STILL TRYING TO KEEP HIM OUT AND MAY WELL PREVAIL. EMBOFF WAS TOLD BY ODINGA'S SON-IN-LAW APRIL 13, THAT CERTAIN POLICE ELEMENTS ARE USING EVERY DEVICE POSSIBLE TO IMPEDE TRAVEL OF ODINGA SUPPORTERS FROM NYANZA PROVINCE TO NAKURU. OBJECTIVE IS ALLEGEDLY TO FILL UP THE ARENA WITH ANTI-ODINGA LUOS WHO FAVOR CURRENT ESTABLISHMENT AND TO PREVENT APRIL 15 CALL FROM BECOMING AN ODINGA ODINGA SHOW.

5. STAKES INVOLVED ARE GENERALLY RECOGNIZED. IF PRESIDENT BESTOWS POLITICAL RESPECTABILITY ON ODINGA ODINGA BY RECEIVING HIM IT WILL BE EXTREMELY DIFFICULT TO PREVENT HIM FROM STANDING IN NEXT YEAR'S PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS. HE WOULD CERTAINLY WIN IN HIS HOME DISTRICT OF SIAYA. ONCE IN PARLIAMENT

AGAIN, IT IS GENERALLY RECOGNIZED THAT ODINGA WOULD BECOME
THE UNDISPUTED LUO LEADER AND WOULD QUICKLY BECOME CONTENDER FOR
FUTURE LEADERSHIP ROLE. IN REMAINING TIME, MO AND NJONJO CAN
BE EXPECTED TO EXERT EVERY BIT OF THEIR INFLUENCE TO KEEP
ODINGA OUT OF THE APRIL 15 MEETING AND NOT PERMIT HIM A FOOT
IN THE POLITICAL DOOR.
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